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## Preface - Concerning the Commentary on St John's Gospel

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## CONCERNING THE COMMENTARY ON ST JOHN'S GOSPEL (1840)

### PREFACE

Two editions have been made of Father Libermann's Commentary on St John.

The first came off the presses of St Joseph's mission in Ngazobil (Senegal) in 1872, with the imprimatur of Mgr. Kobès, and a circular from the then Superior General, Fr. Swindenhammer, recommending it to the members of the Congregation: "it was to be feared that our holy founder might destroy it sooner or later. So, having found it one day among his papers at La Neuville, I hastened to abstract it from him and to keep it carefully in a safe place, thinking that a day would come when the Congregation would be happy to rediscover these writings. You will be grateful to me, I think, my dear confreres, for having thus saved them."

The second edition was made at Saint-Michel in Priziac, near Langonnet (France) (N.D. II, 229-230). Compiled also in French, it is likewise out of print.

Fr L. Vogel, CSSp., General Assistant, prepared a new edition of the Commentary in 1958, which was printed in Belgium by Desclée de Brouwer. But, to quote his own words, "the publication of the complete work proving to be practically impossible in present conditions, it was necessary to choose the finest texts... a delicate operation, implying a mutilation."

One of the first tasks, then, of the Spiritan Centre was to see to the publication, as soon as possible, of the complete work, in a critical edition which would make it acceptable to Universities, at a time when young confreres are making it the subject of papers for master's degrees, or of doctoral theses in religious science.

It is especially from a scientific perspective that Fr Joseph Lécuyer and Fr Amedeo Martins, with the advice of Fr Roger Le Déaut, prepared this new edition, referring directly to the

original text of Father Libermann. But some minor errors slipped in. They, however, along with certain omissions, did not escape the vigilant eye of the Chevilly archivist, Fr Bernard Noël. He has concluded a re-reading of the prepared text, comparing it with Father Libermann's, whose handwriting, though difficult to read, is familiar to him. Thus, a definitive edition is now ready, and it is hoped to present it shortly to the general public.

On the basis of this new French text, Father Libermann's manuscript has been translated into English by Fr Myles Fay, CSSp., of the Province of Ireland.

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It is then, in the imminent expectation of a French edition and of an English edition of the Commentary on St John that we have prepared this issue of Spiritan Papers, so that all our confreres, by means of the translations that will be made from the original text, may have access to this gospel meditation of our founder.

Fr Roger Le Déaut, CSSp., professor of Sacred Scripture at the Biblical Institute and a member of the Jewish-Christian Friendship Committee, has sent us from Jerusalem a pertinent reflection on the importance, for Libermann's sons, of a knowledge of Judaism.

Fr Claude Tassin, CSSp., professor of Sacred Scripture at the Catholic Institute in Paris, explains how and in what spirit Father Libermann invites us to read the Bible.

Fr Michael Cahill, CSSp., professor of Sacred Scripture at the Senior Seminary in Liberia, presented a doctoral thesis in theological science to the Catholic Institute in Paris in December 1985, entitled: "Research into Rabbinical Influences and French School Influences in the Commentary on St John". He makes clear what we can expect realistically from the Commentary.

Fr Felix Gils, CSSp., professor of Sacred Scripture in our Indian Ocean Foundation, has evaluated in particular Father Libermann's words on the MARRIAGE FEAST AT CANA, and shares with us, in this regard, his discoveries, thus offering us a method and a key for reading the Commentary.

Fr Felix Porsch, CSSp., professor of Sacred Scripture at the Philos.-Theolog. Superior School (SVD) of St Augustin

(Germany), writes a detailed analysis of Chapter 10 of the Commentary, on the GOOD SHEPERD.

Fr James Okoye, CSSp., General Assistant, a former lecturer at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA) in Nigeria, makes a commentary for us on the thoughts of Father Libermann on THE CALL OF THE DISCIPLES in the First Chapter.

Father Libermann would be the most surprised of all to find such a panoply of Spiritan exegetes busy about his writings; he should be happy also about the interest and high esteem with which they surround them. . .

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